



# EL SLATER'S beef cheek, butternut broth sourdough

Ask of beef cheeks as the butcher's cut of meat. They are a good meaty with very little wastage, but they do a lot of cooking. A long slow braise herbs or spices and some suitable d will bring them to tenderness.

g dried porcini mushrooms  
tres of water  
bsp olive oil  
beef cheek  
butternut squash, peeled, cut into  
n chunks  
rge onion, roughly chopped  
Og orzo  
e largest round sourdough loaf you  
1 find  
osp chopped parsley

our 2 litres of boiling water into a large  
owl and add the porcini mushrooms,  
to infuse 20 minutes.

Warm the olive oil in a frying pan and  
brown the beef cheek. Transfer to a  
casserole.

Soften the onions in the frying pan until  
golden and transfer to the casserole.  
n the butternut squash and transfer also.

Pour the porcini liquid and the  
mushrooms into the casserole and bring  
boil.

immer gently for 3 hours with the lid  
lightly off, stirring occasionally and  
g up with boiling water if it appears  
reducing significantly.

When the 3 hours have elapsed, tip  
he orzo into the casserole and cook  
urther 10 minutes.

ake the largest round sourdough you can  
nd. Cut off the top and hollow out the  
Ladle the soup into the bread, dust the  
th chopped parsley and serve.

‘How did we  
become so  
keen to taste  
what the rest  
of the world  
eats?’

NIGEL SLATER

A GLOBAL FEAST  
Slater shares a meal with  
Miles Chambers, Sumiko  
Sarashima and Regina Waldman

◁ collective palate so adventurous, so keen to taste what the rest of the world eats?

There are many factors that have made the British more welcoming to non-indigenous food than arguably any other country, and our penchant for foreign travel is high on the list. But for the most part it has been the arrival of the real thing on our doorsteps. Food as different from those packet curries as anyone could imagine. The home cooking that has come here with those who have emigrated to Britain and set up shops and restaurants or have simply allowed others to share their food with them at home.

As I discovered during the filming of *Eating Together*, people come to our shores for a host of different reasons. They may make Britain their home because they want to continue their education here; they might come to train for a specific career; or they may treat us as a place of safety after escaping a dangerous or threatening life in the place of their birth. Others come here for employment, or perhaps simply because they fell in love. The reasons are varied and the stories behind them make fascinating viewing. But one thing is for sure, many of them bring their recipes and cooking with them.

Britain's indigenous food, the gorgeous produce from our own back yard, has seen a healthy renaissance in recent years. We arguably have better access to the country's finest ingredients than at any other time in our history. Our heritage of producing good ingredients and

cooking them simply has never been in such good stead and yet, how many times a week do we eat non-native food at home? The pasta suppers and cheese-laden pizzas, the curries from India, Vietnam and Thailand and the noodle and rice dishes from China and Japan. In the course of a week it seems that most of us eat more ethnic food than food from our own shores.

THE INTRIGUING THING to this cook is just how similar many of the world's favourite foods are. We think of each country having a very different diet and yet when we compare them there are more similarities than you might think. A noodle is something we generally think of as being Chinese, but then realise it is only a short jump to the Japanese ramen, the Italian spaghetti or the short vermicelli used by South Asian cooks in kheer, one of their favourite milk puddings.

Other favourite dishes follow a similar story: the custard that we so love in our traditional trifle or on apple pie can be found as the filling of the little custard tarts of Portugal or the rose-flavoured almond milk puddings of the Middle East. And what about our beloved hotpot, so much part of our diet for hundreds of years? And yet a dish of meat cooked for hours at a low temperature, padded out with cheap ingredients for the sake of economy, exists in so many cultures. The Moroccan tagine, the Indian korma and the Iranian chicken casserole fesenjan all share a culinary DNA.



HAPPY FOOD  
Meera Sodha  
shows off  
Gujarati kachori

Without exception, the cooks I have had the pleasure to work with in this series told me that there are certain dishes that remind them instantly of home. In some cases just one or two ingredients, not even the finished dish. That is why they continue to cook them, either regularly or for special family occasions.

I have always known there is an emotional connection to food, something I have explored in my own memoir *Toast*, but the emotional connection of each dish to the contributors' family and heritage, to their personal story, is particularly palpable here.

BUT WHAT MAKES me especially happy is just how much our own local food has been enriched by that of other cultures. Because that was what I set out to do: celebrate all the good things we have on our doorstep. This series shows how the food we once considered rather unusual and exotic so firmly shares a heart and soul with similar dishes throughout the world.

But there were unexpected delights. Like listening to the conversations of my fellow cooks as they worked together in the kitchen, and being surprised at not only how their traditional recipes contained similar methods, but how many of their religious beliefs and observances crossed over, too.

But even more than that, the series has allowed me to see the sheer joy and delight of being part of a kitchen where so many ideas and recipes are shared. Not to mention those moments, many off camera, when our cooks relax and sit round the table, tucking into each other's food. Talking, drinking, laughing and of course, eating together.

NIGEL SLATER'S

# Profiteroles with cheat's custard

As good as the classic cream-filled profiterole recipe can be, the crisp pastry feels even more special when filled with custard. You could make your own from scratch or use this easy cheat's version.

FOR THE PROFITEROLES

- 250ml water
- 100g butter
- 150g plain flour
- pinch of salt
- 4 eggs

FOR THE CHEAT'S CUSTARD

- 4 egg yolks
- 4 tbsp caster sugar
- 1 vanilla pod
- 2 tbsp Marsala wine
- 300g mascarpone

FOR THE TOPPING

- 100g dark chocolate (75% cocoa solids)
- 100g white chocolate
- 60g pistachios, coarsely chopped
- 30g crystallised rose petals
- 30g crystallised violets

1 Set the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. In a large saucepan warm the water, butter, flour and salt and mix well. Whisk the eggs in another bowl.

2 Over a moderate heat using an electric beater, whisk the contents of the saucepan

while gradually pouring in the beaten eggs. Continue to whisk until the mixture is smooth and glossy.

3 Place tablespoons of the mixture on a lightly buttered baking sheet, or one covered with baking parchment, setting them a good 2–3cm apart. Bake for about 25 minutes, until puffed and golden.

4 Remove from the baking sheet, pierce each one to let the steam out, then cool on a rack. Repeat until you have used up all the mixture.

5 For the cheat's custard, whisk 4 egg yolks with the caster sugar and the seeds of a vanilla pod. Add the Marsala wine and mascarpone and mix well until smooth.

6 Make small splits in each of the buns with a sharp knife. Using a teaspoon, stuff each one with a small amount of the custard. Arrange the stuffed buns in a tall pile on a large plate or cake stand.

7 Melt the dark and white chocolate in two separate bowls over two pans of simmering water. When the chocolate is melted, trickle it over the buns.

8 Coarsely chop the pistachios, crystallised rose and violets. Scatter them over the profiteroles to decorate.

